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PUBLICATION IN PROFESSIONAL JOURNALS  
IN SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING: A SURVEY  
OF EDITORIAL PROCEDURES AND OPINION

Richard M. Davis  
Professor of English, AFIT  
Technical Report - AU-AFIT-LS-1-84  
February 1984

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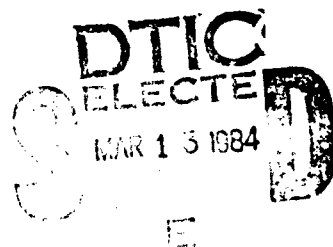
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February 1984

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## PREFACE

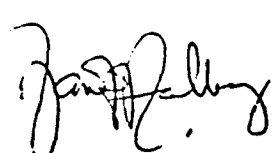
This report presents the results of a survey of the editors of eighty-five professional journals in scientific and engineering fields. It includes information about the journals themselves and the editorial procedures and practices concerned as well as the editors' observations about working with authors and their suggestions to them for successful journal publication.

My sincere thanks are due the busy respondents for taking the time to complete the questionnaire and for the many comments that they added. The information and advice that they provided should be most helpful both to potential contributors and to others concerned with the publication of professional journals.

Richard M. Davis

APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE APR 1961

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Jan F. Salby, Major  
Director AFIT/FA

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### Abstract

A questionnaire was sent to the editors of 132 professional journals in engineering and allied scientific and technical fields to determine policies and procedures involved in acceptance or rejection of material received and in publication in the journal. Comments or suggestions that might be helpful to potential contributors were solicited. Three of the questionnaires were returned as undeliverable, and 87 replies were received (67 percent return).

The majority (58) of the journals have circulations between 3000 and 15,000 and their primary focus is on basic and applied research, theoretical development, applications, and new developments in the field, with relatively little emphasis on society activities, new products, and other peripheral matters. They are supported primarily by subscriptions and page charges. The majority of the editors are part time editors of whom half receive some payment for their effort.

All but four of the editors use referees regularly, but only 17 indicated that they always accept the referees' judgements. All journals supply instructions for authors, and about two thirds specify a style guide, the overwhelming majority being guides produced by the sponsoring society. All but two of the editors accept unsolicited material from authors who are not members of the sponsoring society, and most of them sometimes solicit materials from members or others. The most common reasons given for rejection of material received were the subject (not suitable for the journal), the coverage (questionable significance, too shallow, or questionable validity), and the presentation (bad organization or ineffective expression).

The most puzzling or irritating factors in working with authors relate to suggested changes and to expression. The most common mistakes made by authors are concerned with the organization and presentation of the material and failure to follow the instructions provided for preparation of the manuscript. The most common advice that the editors would give to authors is to follow the guidelines provided for preparation of the manuscript, to write clearly and concisely, and to present only the material that will be of interest to the reader in a logical sequence with proper citation of related work.

PUBLICATION IN PROFESSIONAL JOURNALS  
IN SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING: A SURVEY  
OF EDITORIAL PROCEDURES AND OPINION

I Introduction

With the rapidly increasing pace of advancement in scientific and technical fields, it has become more and more critical that professionals in those fields maintain currency. They must keep abreast of significant advances as they occur, inform others of their own contributions to the field concerned, and exchange ideas and experience with their colleagues. The professional societies, of course, are the primary forum through which this is done, and their meetings, symposia, and publications are the principal media.

Traditionally, the professional journals have been the primary vehicle for dissemination of information of broad and lasting interest to professionals in a field. With the ever-increasing specialization in the major scientific and technological fields, the rapid development within them, and the increased numbers of people involved, the number of professional journals continues to grow - as do the numbers of their readers and contributors.

The survey reported here was undertaken to develop information about publication in a limited number of journals in high technological areas published by professional societies. The editors themselves are the primary authorities on these matters. They know what they do, and how and why they do it - the constraints on them, the problems that they encounter, and the basis for decisions that they make. So it seemed



reasonable to solicit their comments on the process of publication within the journals they edit and any advice that they might have for potential contributors. These should be of particular interest to all who might wish to contribute to these or similar journals.

Section II describes the survey itself, Section III presents the complete results, and Section IV summarizes the results.

## II Procedure

The data and comments reported were gathered through a mail survey of the editors of professional journals in several areas of engineering and in allied scientific and technical fields. The questionnaire used and the means by which the editors to be surveyed were selected were simple and direct.

### Questionnaire

The three-page questionnaire was kept simple in the hope of generating a strong return. The names of the journal, the editor, and the publisher (society) were typed at the top of the first page. The twenty-two questions used were short, and all but the last three required only an X placed in the proper box or a number written in the appropriate space. The focus of the questions was as follows:

#### Questions

- 1-3 Journals - circulation, content, support
- 4-5 Editors - compensation, assistance
- 6-7 Referees - use, availability, response time
- 8-9 Guidance for Authors - instructions, style guides
- 10-14 Material Received - quantity received, quantity published, backlog
- 15-19 Processing the Material - acknowledgment, time to acceptance/rejection, time to publication, reasons for delays and rejections
- 20-22 Editor's Comment - on working with authors, common mistakes made by authors, general advice to authors

The questionnaire is included as pages 6-8 of this report.

#### Letter of Transmittal

Each questionnaire was accompanied by a form letter of transmittal. Names of the recipients were individually typed on the letters, and each was individually signed.

This short letter indicated that there was probably a good bit of misinformation about the policies and procedures involved in the editing and publication of professional journals, that the editors themselves are in the best position to comment upon them, and that I hoped that the results of the survey would be helpful to potential authors, and ultimately to the editors themselves. The letter is included on page 9.

#### Population Polled

The intention was to draw upon the knowledge and experience of the editors of reputable professional journals in science and engineering, the kind of journals that the faculty and graduate students in our School of Engineering would commonly refer to. These would be journals in which publication would generally be considered to be a contribution to the field concerned, thus meriting the attention of colleagues. The journals whose editors would be surveyed were selected from those in the Library of our School of Engineering. A good many possible restrictions might have been used in determining those to be included; the four limitations imposed were the following:

1. Only journals whose current issues were kept in the main reading room were considered. These were the journals most often reviewed by the faculty and students (and that is why they were kept in the main reading room).

2. Only journals published by a professional engineering society or by a scientific or technical society in an allied area were selected. No company or commercial journals were included.
3. Only journals published in the United States were surveyed. This limitation was intended to reduce response time.
4. Only journals clearly focused on the matter of the professional field itself were surveyed. Any primarily concerned with society news or other such matters were not included.

At the time the survey was made, the School of Engineering Library maintained subscriptions to approximately 1250 journals. On the basis of the four limitations, the editors of 132 journals were selected for inclusion in the survey.

# EDITORIAL COMMENT

Journal \_\_\_\_\_

Editor \_\_\_\_\_

Publisher \_\_\_\_\_

## 1. Approximate circulation

up to 999	1000- 2999	3000- 6999	7000- 14999	15000- 24999	25000- 49999	over 50,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## 2. Over all, in what category or categories would you place the primary content of the journal?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Theoretical development | <input type="checkbox"/> New products                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Basic research          | <input type="checkbox"/> General developments in the field |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Applied research        | <input type="checkbox"/> Society activities                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Applications            | Other _____<br>(please specify)                            |

## 3. What provides the principal support of the journal?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advertising revenue  | <input type="checkbox"/> Society treasury |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Subscription fees  | <input type="checkbox"/> Outside grant    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Page charges   |   |
| - amount per page \$ _____  |   |
| - Some journals accommodate some articles on which page charges cannot be met. On what percentage of articles published are page charges required? _____% |   |

## 4. Editorial staff

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Full-time paid editor |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Part-time editor      | Paid? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |

## 5. Are there assistants or others on the editorial staff?

☐ No ☐ Yes Number \_\_\_\_\_

## 6. Do you use outside referees (reviewers, readers) to screen material received and suggest any necessary revision?

- |                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes       | Usual number of referees per article _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes | Approximate percentage of time _____%      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No        |  |

7. If you use referees--

Do you always accept their judgment?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Are suitable referees readily available in your field?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Is their response time a problem?

☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Seldom or never

Usual response time \_\_\_\_\_ (weeks)

8. What guidance is provided potential contributors?

☐ Instructions printed in journal

☐ Instructions available from journal or society

9. Do you specify a particular style guide?

What guide? \_\_\_\_\_

Material Received

10. Do you normally accept unsolicited articles from authors who are not members of the sponsoring society?

☐ Yes ☐ No

11. Do you solicit particular articles (from members or others)?

☐ Often ☐ Occasionally ☐ Never

12. About how many articles are submitted per year? \_\_\_\_\_

13. About how many articles do you publish per year? \_\_\_\_\_

14. What is the usual backlog of accepted articles (with necessary revisions) awaiting publication? \_\_\_\_\_ (number)

Processing Material

15. Do you acknowledge manuscripts as they are received? ☐ Yes ☐ No

16. What is the approximate time between receipt of a manuscript and your acceptance or rejection? \_\_\_\_\_ months

17. What is the approximate time between first receipt of a manuscript and publication? \_\_\_\_\_ months

18. What most often delays publication of a good article?

19. What are the most common reasons for rejecting articles submitted?

Subject

☐ not suitable for journal

☐ not timely

Coverage

☐ too shallow

☐ questionable validity

☐ too exhaustive

☐ questionable significance

Length

☐ too long

☐ too short

Presentation

☐ bad organization

☐ ineffective expression

☐ failure to follow style  
guide

☐ ineffective or unusable  
illustrations

Other? \_\_\_\_\_

20. What is the most puzzling (or irritating) factor in working with authors?

21. What is the most common mistake made by contributors?

22. What general advice would you offer to contributors?

Yes      No

☐

☐

Please send me a summary of the results when they  
are available.

☐

☐

You may use my name and quote my comments in  
publishing the results of the survey.

3.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE  
AIR FORCE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (ATIC)  
WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE, OHIO 45433



In the professional societies, everyone seems to be an expert on the way to produce articles that will be published in professional journals. And, we hear a good bit of comment and sometimes some criticism about the process of publication. Some individual bits of criticism are probably justified, but I suspect that much of it is not. Much is probably based on ignorance of the processes involved and the situations in which the editors work.

It seems to me that the editors themselves are in the best position to comment on the development and publication of articles in professional journals, and I am conducting this survey to draw upon their experience and ideas. I hope that the results will be helpful to potential authors--and, perhaps, ultimately of some benefit to editors.

I would very much like to receive your opinions and suggestions and will certainly appreciate any time that you may take to complete the enclosed form and return it to me.

Sincerely,

*Richard M. Davis*

RICHARD M. DAVIS  
School of Engineering



### III Results

Of the 132 questionnaires mailed, three were returned as undeliverable. Of the remaining 129 potential replies, 87 were received. As the majority of the editors surveyed were busy people (editing the journal was only a part time activity) with little to gain from completing the survey questionnaire, the 67 percent return appears strong.

Eighty five of the questionnaires returned were useable and only two were not. The responses received to each of the survey questions are presented in sequence on the following pages. In some instances an editor did not answer a particular question, and in some an editor selected more than one of the possible responses, so the total number of responses indicated is not always 85. But all responses received are included in the totals.

#### Journals

1. Approximate Circulation (Seven categories were provided with boxes to be checked).

Up to 999	-	1
1000 - 2999	-	15
3000 - 6999	-	36
7000 - 14999	-	22
15000 - 24999	-	3
25000 - 49999	-	3
Over 50,000	-	<u>5</u>
		85

There should be no surprises here. The majority of the journals (58) have circulations between 3000 and 15,000, with the largest group (36) falling in the range from 3000 to 6999. This is what might be expected in professional journals in highly specialized technological areas within the major disciplines. Those with the highest circulation (50,000 and over) were generally journals intended to appeal to a broader portion of the members within a professional field. These included Metal Progress, Automotive Engineering, Proceedings of the American Society for Civil Engineers, QST, and American Scientist.

Within these ranges of circulation, the journals may be grouped as follows according to their period of issue.

	Up to 999	1000- 2999	3000- 6999	7000- 14999	15000- 24999	25000- 49999	Over 50000	Total
Weekly				1				1
Biweekly			1	2				3
Monthly		5	9	11	1	3	4	33
Bimonthly		1	15	4			1	21
Quarterly	1	9	11	4	2			27
	1	15	36	22	3	3	5	85

The journals with the smallest circulation are generally published quarterly (10 of the 16 journals with circulation of 2999 or less) while those with the highest circulation are generally published monthly (7 of the 8 with circulation of 25,000 or greater). Between these extremes there is no clear pattern in the period of issue, and this is the range of circulation within which most of the journals fall.

2. Overall, in what categories would you place the primary content of the journal? (Seven categories were listed, and space was provided for listing any other main category that might be appropriate for the journal concerned.)

<u>Responses</u>	<u>Category</u>
34	Theoretical Development
45	Basic Research
46	Applied Research
33	Applications
5	New Products
23	New Developments in the Field
8	Society Activities
<u>8</u>	Other (Items listed included
202	review of published data, National news, education, experience, reviews of research findings, clinical applications, applied mathematics, and process and extractive metallurgy)

Most editors indicated two or three primary areas of interest, but most probably carry some society news, meeting notices, general development in the field, and other such materials beyond the primary content.

There should be nothing surprising in the focus indicated by the editors. Primary interest is in theoretical development, basic and applied research, and application - as would be expected in a professional journal. There is little primary emphasis on new products or society news. Many societies carry a variety of such items in publications other than their professional journals.

3. What provides the principal support for the journal?  
(Five sources were listed, and space was provided to list the amount of page charges and the percentage of articles on which they are required.)

<u>Responses</u>	<u>Source</u>
13	Advertising Revenue
62	Subscription Fees
37	Page Charges
19	Society Treasury
<u>0</u>	Outside Grant
131	

Relatively few of the editors (13) listed advertising revenues as a primary source of support. This is what would be expected in professional journals. Of the thirteen, only two did not list one of the other major sources of support.

The majority of the journals (62) draw primary support from subscription fees. Nineteen draw support from the society treasury. There was some ambiguity in the question as the subscription fee for the journal is often included (with or without identification) in the annual dues for the society. Several of the editors noted this point. Only ten of the editors did not list either subscription fees or the society treasury as a principal source of support. Of these, two listed advertising revenue as a primary source and eight listed page charges.

Somewhat less than half (37) listed page charges. The lowest charge listed was \$10, and the highest \$100, with the majority (23) falling between \$60 and \$80. Twelve of these were \$70. Only 20 of the editors

indicated that page charges are required on a specific percentage of the articles published (the percentages ranged from 20% to 100%) and almost all added notes indicating that the page charges are not a firm requirement but that most authors pay them. Several indicated that publication is faster when these charges are paid.

None of the editors indicated that their journals received primary support from an outside grant. This was something of a surprise. It seemed that some of the newer ones in highly technological areas might be partially supported by government or foundation grants, but this was not the case.

#### Editorial Staff

4. Editorial staff (Boxes were provided to indicate whether the editor was full or part time and whether or not the editor was paid.)

<u>Responses</u>	<u>Category</u>
15	Paid full-time editor
69	Part-time editor
	34 Paid
	35 Not paid
<u>1</u>	No reply
85	

About a dozen of the part-time editors included comment, often sardonic, about the amount of their compensation.

Of the editors responding, 18% were paid full-time editors - this includes all but one of the editors of journals with a circulation of 25,000 copies or more. The majority (82%) were part-time editors, about

half of whom were paid and half of whom were not. So most of the editors were performing a service for the society and the profession for little or no monetary compensation. Their task is one that may involve a good bit of work and considerable frustration.

5. Are there others on the staff? (Boxes were provided to be checked and a space to indicate the number of assistants.)

<u>Responses</u>	<u>Reply</u>
12	No
71	Yes
<u>2</u>	No Reply
85	

The question was intended to determine whether the editor had direct support in the evaluation and processing of materials received. Most editors indicated that they had one or two assistants and some clerical support. A few evidently did not understand the point of the question and included support from such sources as a national advisory board.

#### Referees

6. Do you use referees (reviewers, readers) to screen material received and suggest any necessary revision?

77	Yes
4	Sometimes
<u>4</u>	No
85	

Usual number of referees per article?

1	-	5
1-2	-	6
2	-	44
2-3	-	4
3	-	20
3-4	-	1
5	-	<u>1</u>
81		

Most of the editors use referees all of the time, only a few use them only some of the time or not at all. This is what would be expected in professional journals. Most use two or three referees per article, and only two use more than three. The mean is 2.2 referees per article for the 81 editors using them.

7. For those who do use referees -  
Do you always accept their judgment?

28	Yes
50	No
<u>3</u>	No response
81	

Eleven of the editors who indicated yes on this question added a qualification (such as usually, almost always, except rarely, or most of the time). Most, then, do not blindly accept the reviewer's judgment, and many added notes indicating that editorial judgment was used.

Are suitable referees readily available in your field?

78 Yes

1 No

2 No response

81

Is their response time a problem?

24 Often

50 Sometimes

5 Never

2 No response

81

Usual response time (in weeks)

0 2

20 2-3.9

24 4-5.9

9 6-7.9

6 8-9.9

13 10

9 No response

81

Most editors do not always accept their reviewers' judgments, and many of those who indicated that they do added disclaimers to the effect that editorial judgment contrary to the referees' recommendations was sometimes used. Only 1 of 79 editors responding indicated that suitable referees were not readily available in his field. But only five of the editors



indicated that referee response time is never a problem. The mean response time indicated for referees was 6.4 weeks with a minimum of 2 weeks and a maximum of 15 weeks.<sup>1</sup>

#### Guidance for Authors

8. What guidance is provided for potential contributors?

70 Instructions printed in the journal

43 Instructions available from the journal  
or society

113

All journals provided guidance for potential contributors, many providing both instructions in the journal and separate instruction materials from the journal or society upon request.

9. Do you specify a particular style guide?

54 Specified one or more

31 Indicated "none" or left the space blank

Of the 54 editors specifying a style guide, 50 specified the society's own guide. The Chicago Manual of Style was mentioned by two, the GPO Style Manual by two, and four other manuals by single editors. Generally, the larger societies (IEEE, American Institute of Physics, American Chemical Society) publish their own guides.

While the majority of the editors specify a style guide to be followed, 31 of them do not. Evidently they feel that the instructions in the journal or those available from the society are sufficient.

---

<sup>1</sup>Herein lies a good part of the reason that authors often have to wait so long for acceptance or rejection of an article submitted to a professional journal for consideration. It isn't the editor who is dragging his feet; it's the referees. Since making this survey, I have attempted to reply more quickly when asked to referee an article.

Potential contributors can read the requirements in these, look at models (articles in the journal), and apply a modicum of good sense.

Material Received

10. Do you normally accept unsolicited articles from authors who are not members of the society?

80 Yes

3 No

2 No Response

85

You don't have to be a member of the society to publish in most of these professional journals.

11. Do you solicit particular articles (from members or others)?

15 Often

48 Occasionally

20 Never

2 No Response

85

Most editors will solicit articles from particular authors on subjects of interest, and some often do it.

12. About how many articles are submitted per year?

13. About how many articles do you publish per year?

14. What is the usual backlog of accepted articles (with necessary revision) awaiting publication?

Responses to these questions are tabulated on Table I. These are estimates by the editors and tend to be round numbers - 40, 75, 150, and such. Because of the considerable differences in the size of the

circulation of the journals, the replies for journals in the seven circulation categories are listed separately on Table I and the totals are listed in the final column. The indicated number of submissions received ranges from 35 to 3000; the number published ranges from 20 to 2000; and the usual backlog of articles awaiting publication ranges from 0 to 400. For the most part, backlogs are surprisingly low: 46 of the 66 editors responding to this question indicated backlogs of 30 accepted articles or less, and only 11 of the 66 reported backlogs of 51 articles or more.

An attempt was made to analyze the replies in a variety of ways but, perhaps because of the variations in scope, focus, circulation, and frequency of issue, no significant trends were evident. Each editor appears to publish what he can as soon as he can within the scope of intended coverage and depending on the quantity and quality of the material received, the size of the journal, and the frequency of issue. Generally, the journals with the highest circulation (15,000 or more) publish a substantially lower percentage of materials received (38.6%) than do those with lower circulation (59.3%). But beyond this, little generalization seems justified on the basis of the responses received.

#### Processing the Material

15. Do you acknowledge manuscripts as they are received?

83 Yes

0 No

2 No response

85

16. What is the approximate time between receipt of a manuscript and acceptance or rejection?

TABLE I: ARTICLES RECEIVED PER YEAR, ARTICLES PUBLISHED PER YEAR, USUAL BACKLOG

Numbers are based on rough approximations by editors. Various degrees of rounding are obviously involved.

	JOURNAL CIRCULATION							TOTAL
	To 999	1000-2999	3000-6999	7000-14999	15000-24999	25000-49999	Over 50000	
	REC PUB BKLG	REC PUB BKLG	REC PUB BKLG	REC PUB BKLG	REC PUB BKLG	REC PUB BKLG	REC PUB BKLG	REC PUB BKLG
0-10	1							0 0 31
11-20	1	1	15	7	2	1	1	0 0 2 7
21-30		1	4	1				0 2 5 8
31-40		2 1	2 3	2 2	1	1	1	3 3 6 6
41-50		1 1	2 3	1 2 2				2 2 3 3
51-60		1 1 1	1 2	2			1	1 6 1
61-70		1	1		1			1 2 0
71-80		1 1	2 4 1	1				4 5 1
81-90		1	1	1 3 1				1 0 1
91-100		1	1	1				2 4 1
101-110		1 2	1 1	1				1 1 0
111-120								2 3 0
121-130		1	1 2	1			1	3 3 1
131-140			1 1	1	1			1 2 0
141-150		2	1 3 2	1 1			1	4 4 3
151-175			1 2	1	1			1 4 0
176-200		2 2	6 2	2 1		1	1	11 6 1
201-300		1 1	6 1	2 1 1	1			10 3 1
301-400		2	1 4 1	2 3				5 7 1
401-500			1 1	1				2 1 0
501-750		1	3 1	3 1	1	1		8 3 0
751-1000				2 1		1	1	3 2 0
Over 1000			7 5	2 1		1	1	11 6 0
TOTAL	1 1 1	13 13 10	34 36 31	19 19 16	3 3 3	3 3 2	3 3 3	76 78 66
Mean % Published	57%	53%	62%	57%	32%	39%	41%	
			59%			38.6%		

Totals do not quite match. Some editors reported some numbers but not others.

17. What is the approximate time between first receipt of a manuscript and publication?

<u>Months</u>	<u>Accept/Reject</u>	<u>Publish</u>
1	13	0
2	18	5
3	20	4
4	9	6
5	10	5
6	6	10
7	3	4
8	2	10
9	1	8
10	0	5
11	0	3
12	0	11
13	0	0
14	0	1
15	0	3
15	0	4 (Max. 22)
No Response	<u>3</u>	<u>6</u>
	85	85
MEAN	3.37	8.32

Most editors are able both to accept or reject articles and to publish them in reasonable time despite delays in the refereeing process, delays in revision by the author, processing problems, and backlogs. In some cases, though, the time between the original submission and actual

publication is quite high (a year or more in 19 of the 79 journals from which responses were received). In an area of rapidly developing technology, this can be a matter of real concern.

18. What most often delays publication of a good article?

As might be expected, the three reasons most often listed were-

- 38     Referee review
- 32     Author revision
- 16     Backlog (available space)

Other reasons mentioned by two or more editors included-

- 5     Page charges
- 4     Processing
- 4     Review of proofs or galleys
- 4     Obtaining useable illustrations
- 2     Publication deadlines

19. What are the most common reasons for rejecting articles submitted? (Boxes were provided on this question for the editor to check.)

Subject

- 63     Not suitable for the journal
- 4     Not timely

Coverage

- 39     Too shallow
- 8     Too exhaustive
- 39     Questionable validity
- 55     Questionable significance

Length

- 26 Too long
- 4 Too short

Presentation

- 35 Bad organization
- 4 Failure to follow style guide
- 33 Ineffective expression
- 11 Ineffective or unusable illustrations

Other (Space was provided for any other reasons the editor might want to list. Twenty-eight of the editors added one or more additional reasons for rejection which fell largely into three general categories.)

Research Itself - lack of originality, not first-rate science, lack of novel ideas, not technically sound, and others of this sort.

Writing - bad writing, unintelligible English, write better manuscripts, and others.

Organization and Presentation - results not supported, data overkill, previous work not acknowledged, unsupported conclusions, and others.

Thus, the six reasons most often listed were-

- (63) (Subject) not suitable for journal
- (55) (Coverage) questionable significance
- (39) (Coverage) too shallow
- (39) (Coverage) questionable validity
- (35) (Presentation) bad organization
- (33) (Presentation) ineffective expression

It should be noted that eight of the editors who did not check boxes concerning the presentation of the material added notes to the effect that organization, expression, and illustrations often were not acceptable in the copy received, but that these were things that the author could correct.

#### Editorial Comment

20. What is the most puzzling (or irritating) factor in working with authors?
21. What is the most common mistake made by contributors?
22. What general advice would you give to contributors?

The last three questions on the survey were intended to elicit editorial comment on three different points, and to a large extent, they did. Seventy-nine of the 85 editors responded to one or more of the three questions, sometimes listing several main points in a single response. But while some editors listed a given point as a puzzling or irritating factor, others listed it as a common mistake, and others focused on correcting that point in their general advice to contributors. And some editors addressed the same point in their responses to all three questions (listing it as a puzzling factor and a common mistake, and offering the advice that it should be corrected). As a result, many of the subjects covered in the responses to the three questions are similar. They are summarized below, and the individual statements made by the editors are presented in Appendices B, C, and D.

20. What is the most puzzling (or irritating) factor in working with authors?

#### Manuscript (8)

Failure to comply with guidelines or instructions



Organization and Presentation (6)

Failure to show significance of work

Failure to see needs, interest, viewpoint of reader

Too long

Lack of organization

Trying to sell themselves and their organizations

Expression (14)

Elaborate verbosity, jargon

Clarity, conciseness

Carelessness (mechanics, spelling, punctuation)

Poor writing (abominable writers!)

Review Process (5)

Impatience

Failure to understand the system

Suggested Changes (20)

Unwillingness to accept suggestions

(resentment of constructive criticism, "proud parent syndrome", impugn the natures of reviewers, failure to understand that the editor wants the article to be read, appreciated, and understood)

Later Mechanics (12)

Delay in revision - seeming to lose interest

Delay in returning galleys

Missed deadlines

21. What is the most common mistake made by contributors?

Manuscript (21)

Failure to follow instructions for authors, style guide

Organization and Presentation (50)

Rambling - do not show problem, significance of results, no summary, failure to make a case

Failure to cite previous work

Too long - overly detailed information, too much detail regarding trivial problems

Poor or unusable graphics

Inconsistent use of units

No mention of uncertainties or overall errors

Technical errors

Expression (8)

Lack of clarity, conciseness - try to write clearly, not profoundly

Failure to write for the audience - use of highly specialized terms

General (15)

Unaware of the scope of the journal - look at a few issues and see what we publish

Too PR oriented - tooting their own horns

Overestimating the quality of their own work

Insignificant papers - old work, not up to professional standards

22. What general advice would you give to contributors?

Manuscript (27)

Follow the guidelines in the journal (and style manual)

Follow the format in the journal (references, figures)

Submit a clean manuscript - proof and check it; it's part of the job.

#### Organization and Presentation (18)

Think about the audience - their interests, show significance to the reader and the field, emphasize what is relevant

Cite appropriate related work - omit unnecessary reference to your own

Spend time on organization - state the problem, significance, results

Don't try to cram too much detail into an article

#### Expression (20)

Write clearly, distinctly, concisely - be specific

Avoid esoteric jargon - revise several times before submitting

#### Revision (7)

Get colleagues to read and comment

Put it in a drawer for 30-90 days - then revise

#### Review Process and Suggested Changes (5)

Be patient with the review process

Follow reviewer comments - don't pester the editor

#### General (10)

Don't rush into print - a few good papers are better than many bad ones

Take pride in what you submit - your reputation rides with your contributions

Know your market - don't bother me with material that isn't appropriate for our readers

Submit only good technical results for publication

#### IV Summary

##### Journals

The majority (58) of the 85 editors responding to the survey edit journals with circulations between 3000 and 15,000, as might be expected in professional journals in highly specialized technological areas within the major disciplines. The focus of the journals is primarily on basic and applied research, theoretical development, applications, and new developments in the field, with relatively little emphasis on society activities, new products, and other peripheral topics. They are supported primarily by subscription fees and page charges with only 19 drawing upon the society treasury and 13 receiving advertising revenue.

##### Editors

Only 15 of the journals employ full time editors, with the remainder using part time editors (half of whom are paid and half of whom are not). The majority (71) have some help from one or two assistants.

##### Referees

Seventy-seven of the editors use referees regularly, four use them some of the time, and only four do not use them at all. The usual number of referees is two or three, but only 17 of the editors indicated that they always accept the referees' judgment. All but one of the editors responding indicated that referees are readily available in their fields, but only five indicated that response time from them is never a problem (mean response time being 6.4 weeks).

### Guidance for Authors

The majority of the journals print instructions for authors on manuscript preparation and submission in the journal itself, and about half (43) have additional instructions available upon request. About two thirds (54) specify a particular style guide, the overwhelming majority (50) being guides produced by the sponsoring society.

### Material Received

Only two of the editors indicated that they do not accept unsolicited material from authors who are not members of the sponsoring society, and most (63) sometimes or often solicit materials from members or others. The amount of material received each year varies widely from journal to journal (minimum 35, maximum 3000 items), as does the amount published (minimum 20, maximum 2000). Backlogs of accepted articles awaiting publication vary from 0 to 400.

### Processing the Material

All editors indicated that they acknowledge material as it is received. The mean time indicated to acceptance or rejection is 3.37 months (minimum 1, maximum 9) and the mean time to publication after first receipt of a manuscript is 8.32 months (minimum 2, maximum 22). The predominant reasons given for delay in publication were referee review time, author revision time, and backlog (available space). The most common reasons listed for rejection of material received were the subject (not suitable for the journal), the coverage (questionable significance, too shallow, or questionable validity), and the presentation (bad organization or ineffective expression).

### Editor's Comment

Editors stated that the most puzzling or irritating factors in working with authors relate to suggested changes (unwillingness to accept them) and expression (verbosity, jargon, and simple carelessness). The most common mistakes made by authors are concerned with the organization and presentation of the material (failure to state a subject or problem and show the significance of the results, excessive detail where it is not needed, and failure to cite previous work) and failure to follow the instructions provided for preparation of the manuscript. The most common advice that editors would give to the authors is to follow the guidelines provided for preparation of the manuscript; to write clearly and concisely; and to organize the material in a logical sequence (as problem, significance, results, conclusion), omit unnecessary detail, and cite appropriate related work (but omit unnecessary reference to their own).

Appendix A

Journals Included in Survey Results

Acoustical Society of America

Journal of the Acoustical Society of America

Aerospace Medical Association

Aviation Space and Environmental Medicine

American Association of Physics Teachers

American Journal of Physics

American Astronautical Society, Inc.

The Journal of the Astronautical Sciences

The Astrophysical Journal No. 2, Parts 1 and 2

American Ceramic Society, Inc.

American Ceramic Society Bulletin

Journal of the American Ceramic Society

American Chemical Society

Journal of the American Chemical Society

Analytical Chemistry

Journal of Chemical and Engineering Data

Journal of Chemical Information & Computer Sciences

Chemical Reviews

Environmental Science and Technology

Journal of Organic Chemistry

Journal of Physical & Chemical Reference Data

American Geophysical Union

Journal of Geophysical Research

Reviews of Geophysics and Space Physics

American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics

Astronautics and Aeronautics

American Institute of Biological Sciences

Bio Science

American Institute of Chemical Engineers

AIChE Journal

American Institute of Physics

Applied Physics Letters

The Journal of Chemical Physics

Journal of Mathematical Physics

American Mathematical Association

Mathematics of Computation

American Meteorological Society

Journal of the Atmospheric Sciences

American Nuclear Society, Inc.

Nuclear Technology

Nuclear Science and Engineering

American Physical Society

Physical Review Letters

Physical Review B - Condensed Matter

Physical Review C - Nuclear Physics



American Physiological Society

Journal of Applied Physiology: Respiratory,  
Environmental and Exercise Physiology

American Radio Relay League

QST

American Society of Civil Engineers

Proceedings of the American Society of Civil  
Engineers

American Society for Information Science

Journal of the American Society for Information  
Science

American Society of Mechanical Engineers

Transactions of the ASME: Journal of Mechanical  
Design

Transactions of the ASME: Journal of Fluids  
Engineering

Transactions of the ASME: Journal of Heat Transfer

Transactions of the ASME: Journal of Pressure  
Vessel Technology

American Society for Metals

Metal Progress

Scripta Metallurgica

American Society for Nondestructive Testing

Materials Evaluation

American Society for Quality Control, Inc.

Journal of Quality Technology

American Society for Quality Control and American  
Statistical Association

Technometrics

American Statistical Association

Journal of the American Statistical Association

American Vacuum Society

Journal of Vacuum Science and Technology

Audio Engineering Society

Journal of the Audio Engineering Society - Audio/  
Acoustical Applications

Biometric Society

Biometrics

Institute of Chemical Engineers

CEP - Chemical Engineering Progress

Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers, Inc.

IEEE Journal of Oceanic Engineering

IEEE Journal of Quantum Electronics

IEEE Trans on Acoustics, Speech & Signal  
Processing

IEEE Trans on Aerospace & Electronic Systems

IEEE Trans on Antennas & Propagation

IEEE Trans on Automatic Control

IEEE Trans on Biomedical Engineering

IEEE Trans on Circuits & Systems

IEEE Trans on Communication

IEEE Trans on Components, Hybrids, &  
Manufacturing Technique

IEEE (Continued)

IEEE Trans on Education

IEEE Trans on Electromagnetic Compatibility

IEEE Trans on Industrial Electronics &  
Control Instrumentation

IEEE Trans on Information Theory

IEEE Trans on Instrumentation & Measurement

IEEE Trans on Nuclear Science

IEEE Trans on Professional Communication

IEEE Trans on Reliability

IEEE Trans on Software Engineering

IEEE Trans on Vehicular Technology

Institute of Noise Control Engineering

Noise Control Engineering

Instrument Society of America

ISA Transactions

Mathematical Association of America, Inc.

Mathematics Magazine

Metallurgical Society of AIME

Journal of Metals

Metallurgical Transactions A (Physical  
Metallurgy & Materials Science)

National Academy of Sciences

Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences  
of the United States of America

Operations Research Society of America

Mathematics of Operations Research

Operations Research

Optical Society of America

Applied Optics

Journal of the Optical Society of America

Sigma XI, The Scientific Research Society of N. America

American Scientist

Society for Applied Spectroscopy

Applied Spectroscopy

Society of Automotive Engineers, Inc.

Automotive Engineering

Society for Computer Simulation

SCS

Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics

SIAM Journal on Applied Mathematics

SIAM Journal on Computing

U. S. Strategic Institute

Strategic Review

## Appendix B

### Replies to Question 20

What is the most puzzling (or irritating) factor  
in working with authors?

Lack of concise writing

Helmut A Abt The Astrophysical Journal No 2,  
Parts 1 and 2

Too many engineers are abominable writers

John B Ballance Journal of Metals

Impatience - Many feel that a referee should stop everything  
and concentrate on their paper

James H Bramble Mathematics of Computation

- a) Clarity of presentation
- b) Incomplete, incorrect and improper reference citations
- c) Refusal to make minor modifications suggested by  
referees and editors necessary for acceptance

Dixon Callihan Nuclear Science & Engineering

Delays in turning around proof

J S Cecishing ISA Transactions

Rejected authors who take rejections personally and impugn  
motives of reviewers

William E Collins IEEE Trans on Acoustics,  
Speech & Signal Processing

The length of time required for authors to make the revisions  
necessary for publication of an article

Malcolm J Crocker Noise Control Engineering

Their failure to state relevance of their (academic) work  
to the development of the technical field and to applications  
in the real world

Robert C Dean Jr Transactions of the ASME:  
Journal of Fluids Engineering

They won't follow instructions

Ralph A Evans IEEE Trans on Reliability

Really not too many

William G Fately Applied Spectroscopy

Technical papers - lack of follow-up on revisions, so papers  
just wait

If they want it published, why don't they revise it quickly?

They seem to lose interest for some strange reason

Feature articles - Again, they're going to write an article,  
and next thing you know you've waited six months for it

Linda K Gambaiani Materials Evaluation

No irritations yet (only 4 months on the job)

Joseph N Goodman Journal of the Optical Society of  
America

Their arrogance

Morton Hamermesh Journal of Mathematical Physics

Not following instructions which are clearly printed on  
inside cover of journal

P V Hobbs Journal of the Atmospheric Sciences

Lack of organization/structure in papers

R J Joenk IEEE Trans on Professional Communication

Failure to follow manuscript instructions

Robert H Kadlee AIChE Journal

Their lack of care in preparing manuscripts--revisions submitted a few weeks after first version arrived

Stephen Kahne IEEE Trans on Automatic Control

Their failure to follow clearly stated instructions on manuscript preparation

David R Lide Jr Journal of Physical & Chemical Reference Data

Mediating between referees' comments and author's manuscript defense

John P Marbarger Aviation Space and Environmental Medicine

That they refuse too often to read material (i.e., instructions) sent to them by editor!

Peter Mark Journal of Vacuum Science & Technology

Failure to comply with instructions, delaying publication (e.g., manuscript typing format, including required biographical information, etc.)

George F McClure IEEE Trans on Vehicular Technology

Authors who find it impossible to shorten their papers to a reasonable length

Charles W. McLarnan Transactions of the ASME: Journal of Mechanical Design

Lack of understanding of what the readership of the journal is interested in

Charles T Meadow Journal of the American Society for Information Science

Wedded to limp writing skill conditioned by working in a big bureaucracy, the USAF being a prime example

John A Neubauer Astronautics & Aeronautics

Poor writing skills or lack of concern for reader

William P Pierskalla Operations Research

There aren't any

Roy G Post Nuclear Technology

Most authors are reasonable, but approximately 5% of authors will not accept any negative criticism of their papers

William F Powers The Journal of the Astronautical Sciences

Authors seem to forget that editors want the papers published to be read, to be understood, and to be appreciated. In other words, an editor shares the same goal with any author (I assume authors want their own papers read!)

John S Rigden American Journal of Physics

None. I have written many papers myself and understand authors' problems

Richard B Schulz IEEE Trans on Electromagnetic Compatibility

A tendency to over-elaborate, to use government-ese

R F Shea IEEE Trans on Nuclear Science

Their delay in revising papers

Herman Skolnik Journal of Chemical Information & Computer Sciences

Slow response to referees' comments

E M Sparrow Transactions of the ASME: Journal of Heat Transfer

No single factor

J W Stout The Journal of Chemical Physics



1. Rejection
2. Delay

Ran S Sun IEEE Trans on Biomedical Engineering

Slow response

C M Tapp IEEE Trans on Components, Hybrids, & Manufacturing Technique

Failure to agree with reasons for declination--and author impatience with review period

Richard R Torrens Proceedings of the American Society of Civil Engineers

Authors who insist on discussing their papers--especially technical aspects--by phone

George L Trigg Physical Review Letters

Getting them to get manuscripts in on time

Anthony M Trozzolo Chemical Reviews

ERROGANCE. No one accepts the fact that he/she submitted a "bad" paper

S J Vahaviolos IEEE Trans on Industrial Electronics & Control Instrumentation

Getting them to write clearly and concisely

Cheves Walling Journal of the American Chemical Society

Some impatient authors seem to be those least willing to serve as referees on other manuscripts

John W Wilkinson Technometrics

Authors of the following comments preferred to remain anonymous

No common theme. The most pronounced difficulty in our journal is dealing with busy professionals who have trouble complying with deadlines

Authors sometimes lose interest when asked for revisions  
Authors sometimes amazed at editor if paper is rejected

Their inability to express themselves

Authors who continue to revise an article after it is accepted for publication--sometimes even after it has been edited and set in type

The occasional "difficult" personality

Missed deadlines, conflicts over use of our style in their articles, and expensive changes at galley stage

Their carelessness

Their infinite patience with our editorial process

Submissions of manuscripts that clearly are far outside the editorial or style guidelines of the journal

An insistence on retaining relatively simple and/or standard material rather than concentrating on and expanding on his own new contribution

All authors feel their papers are very important

Inadequate checking and proofreading of manuscripts  
Verbosity

Procrastination

Their resentment of constructive criticism

Authors are great!!

Many of them are trying to "sell themselves or their organization and not concentrating on advancing the state of the art

Excellent writers seem to be open to constructive criticism and respond positively to it. Less adept writers often insist that their style is best and feel that the reviewer has "fouled up" their manuscript

The "PROUD PARENT" syndrome

Failure to live up to a promise to have an article to us by "X" date

No single factor, and of the full set of authors, there are relatively few who are a problem. Overall, the reaction to rejections is the most common problem

Some authors include illegible handwritten symbols and equations. Some expect the editors to supply a proof-reading and spelling correction service

Their personal involvement which leads them to believe they are the best objective reviewers of their own works

Authors' failure to understand needs of the audience of our magazine

They fail to look at an article from point of view of readers

Their not being at the address given--but on an extended trip or sabbatical when we need to find them

Assumption that their paper is a good one despite reviewers' criticisms

Ignoring specific recommendations by reviewers and/or editors re revisions

Reluctance to accept reviewers' criticisms and revise as suggested. Most authors, however, are really cooperative

The answer would require a long essay. One trouble is the unwillingness of some authors to accept suggestions for revision when the manuscript is not actually rejected outright

The presumption by authors that referees and editors are merely obstacles in the way of publishing important and urgent work

## Appendix C

### Replies to Question 21

#### What is the most common mistake made by contributors?

Failure to follow style requirements and need for double-spacing

Helmut A Abt The Astrophysical Journal No 2,  
Parts 1 and 2

Bad syntax

John B Ballance Journal of Metals

They often do not state "the problem," its significance,  
and results obtained clearly

William M Brown IEEE Trans on Aerospace & Electronic  
Systems

- a) Failure to follow instructions to authors
- b) Inclusion of overly detailed information which could  
be covered by reference to internal technical reports

Dixon Callihan Nuclear Science & Engineering

Standard use of SI

J S Cecishing ISA Transactions

Insufficient literature search indicative of prior work

William E Collins IEEE Trans on Acoustics, Speech  
& Signal Processing

Lack of sufficient detail, background, or arguments in  
their articles

Malcolm J Crocker Noise Control Engineering

Producing academic work of little significance - a small "twist"

Robert C Dean Jr Transactions of the ASME: Journal of Fluids Engineering

Submit too many papers involving complex trivial math/stat about irrelevant problems

Ralph A Evans IEEE Trans on Reliability

Incorrect references  
Poor figures  
Poor labeling

William G Fately Applied Spectroscopy

Feature articles - failure to know our field and send me totally irrelevant material. Plus too commercial. For technical papers this is also true--commercialism is dead out with us, we can't afford any of it.

Linda K Gambaiani Materials Evaluation

Overlooking other similar work already published

Joseph N Goodman Journal of the Optical Society of America

Failure to supply 2 copies of manuscript

Morton Hamermesh Journal of Mathematical Physics

Failure to read the guide for manuscripts which appears on the inside back cover of our magazine

George B Hoadley IEEE Trans on Instrumentation & Measurement

To assume the reader knows too much about the author's specialty

P V Hobbs Journal of the Atmospheric Sciences

Failure to reference prior art

John N Howard Applied Optics

Unable to understand the quality of their work

William P Pierskalla Operations Research

Poor abstracts

Roy G Post Nuclear Technology

Do not make the length of the paper correspond to its worth

William F Powers The Journal of the Astronautical Sciences

Sloppy scholarship

John S Rigden American Journal of Physics

Many fail to relate the significance of their contributions to the overall field of the technical journal

Richard B Schulz IEEE Trans on Electromagnetic Compatibility

Trying to make a paper too all-inclusive. Making illustrations difficult to read when reduced

R F Shea IEEE Trans on Nuclear Science

Not writing a significant paper. Too many papers I receive are repetitive of what is already known and published

Herman Skolnik Journal of Chemical Information & Computer Sciences

Submission of papers that are too long

E M Sparrow Transactions of the ASME: Journal of Heat Transfer

Figures unsuitable for reproduction

J W Stout The Journal of Chemical Physics

Working in a vacuum

R J Joenk IEEE Trans on Professional Communication

Paper too long

Robert H Kadlec AIChE Journal

Technical error, lack of knowledge of existing literature

Stephen Kahne IEEE Trans on Automatic Control

Failure to follow manuscript style as required

John P Marbarger Aviation Space and Environmental Medicine

Spelling, grammar. Very few people really know how to write these days

Peter Mark Journal of Vacuum Science & Technology

Failure to use proper citations for references (following IEEE style guide)

George F McClure IEEE Trans on Vehicular Technology

Too much length and an inadequate summary

Charles W McLarnan Transactions of the ASME: Journal of Mechanical Design

Submitting poorly written material that would have a hard time getting a B grade in school

Charles T Meadow Journal of the American Society for Information Science

Not drawing a clear perspective on the subject

John A Neubauer Astronautics & Aeronautics

Lack of appreciation of what is likely to be read

Demetrius T Paris IEEE Trans on Education

Not up to the quality of the Journal publication standard

Hun S Sun IEEE Trans on Biomedical Engineering

Poor or incomplete references to previous work

C M Tapp IEEE Trans on Components, Hybrids, & Manufacturing Technique

Incomplete references

Richard R Torrens Proceedings of the American Society of Civil Engineers

a) Exceeding our length limit

b) References incomplete or improperly cited

George L Trigg Physical Review Letters

Do not read references carefully

S J Vahaviolos IEEE Trans on Industrial Electronics & Control Instrumentation

Overestimating the significance of their work

Cheves Walling Journal of the American Chemical Society

Motivating their work seems to be given too little attention

John W Wilkinson Technometrics

Authors of the following comments preferred to remain anonymous

Material not presented in a logical manner

Insufficient analytical content or "over scholarship" with tons of irrelevant footnotes

To try to publish mediocre papers

They sometimes submit articles that are either too public-relations-oriented (tooting their own horns) or insufficiently applications-oriented



They are unaware of the scope of the Journal

Not looking at the periodical they submit manuscripts to.  
By tailoring the article to needs of magazine, they have more chance of acceptance

Overestimating the audience's knowledge of special terminology and background, resulting in inappropriate level of presentation

Inadequate abstracts and introductions

Did not examine journal to determine proper format for submission

- 1) Poor proofreading of manuscript
- 2) Poor literature search
- 3) Poor figures

Haste

Not following Journal's required format

Poor organization of material

Sloppy drawings/lettering

Lack of references to previous work

Professors tend to get too heavy in theory

Not studying the audience and the direction or scope of the publication beforehand

Not reading instructions. Not reading Journal related material for ideas on presentation

Insufficient attention to figures

Lack of adherence to our publication requirements

Some authors prepare figures in the usual 8 1/2 x 11 format, but do not consider that the figures must also be legible when reduced to final printed size

Improper format

Don't seem to have studied past issues to see what types of articles we publish

Inconsistency in use of SI units, metric systems--if used at all. Often a misuse of tables--lists are not tables. Graphics are usually poor quality

Failure to follow style guide (e.g., single spaced manuscripts, manuscripts on both sides of page, poor illustrations, etc)

Obviously over-length manuscripts (We have a 3 journal page limit)

Failure to position article carefully, both in terms of its development and its contribution

All types of mistakes are made. I cannot think of a "most common" one

- 1) Not checking editorial requirements of the magazine and its audience
- 2) Writing to an academic audience rather than practitioners

Incomplete information to make good case for presentation

They are too taken with the material they obtain in surveys

Lack of clarity in presentation

- 1) Failure to follow Journal format
- 2) Failure to write concisely
- a) Do not read instructions to contributors
- b) Do not cite purity of materials and source
- c) Do not give uncertainties and over-all errors

Failure to provide clear concise reasons in the introduction for undertaking the work and indicating its significance to the scientific community and readers of the Journal

I do not believe that there is "a most common mistake"

## Appendix D

### Replies to Question 22

#### What general advice would you offer to contributors?

Look at recent issues of the journal and emulate the style

Helmut A Abt The Astrophysical Journal No 2,  
Parts 1 and 2

- 1) Contact editor by telephone before submitting a manuscript
- 2) Consider more carefully how to reach out and grab the attention of the reader

John B Ballance Journal of Metals

Put more effort into presentation

James H Bramble Mathematics of Computation

State problem, significance and results clearly, and write paper clearly and concisely

William M Brown IEEE Trans on Aerospace & Electronic Systems

- a) Clarity of presentation
- b) Attention to details of preparation
- c) Distinction between detailed information required for a laboratory report vs condensation for journal publication

Dixon Callihan Nuclear Science & Engineering

When the author has been notified that the article has been accepted for publication, the author must be prepared to allow the time required to respond to editor's requests

J S Cecishing ISA Transactions

Avoid purely theoretical articles

William E Collins IEEE Trans on Acoustics, Speech,  
& Signal Processing

Choose your research carefully so that it is truly  
significant

Robert C Dean Jr Transactions of the ASME: Journal  
of Fluids Engineering

Look at some example papers previously published in the  
journal

William G Fately Applied Spectroscopy

Seems simple, but KNOW YOUR MARKET. Why bother me with  
material that isn't appropriate to our readers?

Linda K Gambaiani Materials Evaluation

Write concisely

Joseph N Goodman Journal of the Optical Society of  
America

Try to write clearly, not "profoundly"

Morton Hamermesh Journal of Mathematical Physics

Boil it down!

George B Hoadley IEEE Trans on Instrumentation &  
Measurement

Rewrite articles several times before submission; seek advice  
of colleagues skilled in writing

P V Hobbs Journal of the Atmospheric Sciences

- 1) Put manuscript in a drawer for 30-90 days, then read and  
revise
- 2) Be aware of current literature

R J Joenk IEEE Trans on Professional Communication

Write concisely and follow instructions

Robert H Kadlec AIChE Journal

Don't "rush into print." One good paper each 2 years is better than 11 weak ones each year

Stephen Kahne IEEE Trans on Automatic Control

Please study instructions to authors in preparing your manuscript

John P Marbarger Aviation Space and Environmental Medicine

Please follow accepted style procedures dictated by copy editors  
Please obey new copyright law

Peter Mark Journal of Vacuum Science & Technology

Communicate with editors early on questions of format and procedure to avoid unnecessary delays for rework

George F McClure IEEE Trans on Vehicular Technology

Have paper reviewed by a competent technical writer before submittal

Charles W McLarnan Transactions of the ASME: Journal of Mechanical Design

Find an article in the journal you like and pattern yours after it in style. If you don't find any you like, you are considering the wrong journal

Charles T Meadow Journal of the American Society for Information Science

Think about the audience and how many people take more than 20 minutes for any publication

John A Neubauer Astronautics & Aeronautics

Put yourself in your readers' shoes

Demetrius T Paris IEEE Trans on Education

Take strong pride in what they submit, since their good or bad personal reputation rides with their contribution

William P Pierskalla Operations Research

Spend more time organizing report. Assign higher priority to revisions

Roy G Post Nuclear Technology

The usual guidelines of defining the problem clearly, making use of existing references, and giving a concise, clear presentation

William F Powers The Journal of the Astronautical Sciences

- 1) Avoid the problems mentioned in 19 and 21
- 2) Be patient with the review process. However, do not hesitate to contact the editor after undue delay

Richard B Schulz IEEE Trans on Electromagnetic Compatibility

Concentrate on truly novel contributions and hold non-essentials to an acceptable minimum. Write clearly, lucidly, to the point

R F Shea IEEE Trans on Nuclear Science

Emphasize what is new relative to what is known, and point out clearly the significance of the new. Review briefly the relevant literature. Do not make a production of what is known already

Herman Skolnik Journal of Chemical Information & Computer Sciences

Maintain paper length within given guidelines  
Subject matter should have a high degree of novelty

E M Sparrow Transactions of the ASME: Journal of Heat Transfer

Read the Journal

J W Stout The Journal of Chemical Physics

Referees' comments - usually sent without identification of the referees

Hun S Sun IEEE Trans on Biomedical Engineering

Library research

C M Tapp IEEE Trans on Components, Hybrids, & Manufacturing Technique

Follow our readily available authors' guide to style, figure and reference requirements

Richard R Torrens Proceedings of the American Society of Civil Engineers

Read the Style Manual and pay close attention to the rules it sets forth

George L Trigg Physical Review Letters

Follow the procedure outlined in "Suggestions to Authors"

Anthony M Trozzolo Chemical Reviews

Follow publication rules, know your related work and write short papers. If your paper is not accepted, ask the Editor why in a polite manner

S J Vahaviolos IEEE Trans on Industrial Electronics & Control Instrumentation

When starting to write up results, think of the journal most suited, then write accordingly--perhaps re-reading guidelines and a manuscript or two

John W Wilkinson Technometrics

Authors of the following comments preferred to remain anonymous

Pay as much attention to the presentation of work as to its origination. Treat the journal review process as a necessary part of a research project and not just as an obstacle. Proofread and check manuscript and page proofs very carefully

Send queries about article idea and suitability before submitting manuscript. Study the general style and format of target journal and adapt your article accordingly before submitting

Only consider publishing good papers. At a good university, the number of publications is not that important—it is the overall contribution of the research (in the opinion of peers) that really counts!

Read our journal and follow instructions in our "Information for Authors"

Assume that you are writing about recent findings in your field for an interested (lawyer) friend. Avoid technical detail, jargon, and special forms, and make sure the significance of the findings is clear to those outside the field

Don't be shy about publishing beautiful and well written works

Apply to the manuscript the same care applied to the experiment

Write clearly; have a non-expert criticise the manuscript before submission

Follow our "Instructions for Authors"

Omit unnecessary references to author's own work, especially company reports

Submit only good technical results for publication

Be specific, concise and lucid

Be concise

Be prepared to rewrite, or rework manuscript

Most know more than they think. They do and should share with peers through publication

Follow instructions

Work with your editor and use an outline or letter of inquiry first

Send their second-rate papers to some other journal

Read the instructions in the journal and read our Style Manual. Look at recent issues of the journal to inform yourself of the practices of the journal



Write concisely!

Study our publication to follow style and content of printed papers

If you have an article in mind, call the editor and talk it over. At this stage, the phone is the most effective means of communication

Submit a paper only after it has been gone over 2-3 times and subjected to some kind of informal "internal" review by friends or colleagues

Write the publisher first, inquiring as to the interest and guidelines for preparation of the manuscript

Check with editor on editorial needs and direction prior to writing or submission

Throw your survey away when you write your article. Ask yourself why reader should read this. Is it interesting? Does it give examples? Can it be easily understood?

Read instructions to contributors

Avoid cliches, too much esoteric jargon--make sure that what is written is logical, follows a logical sequence--don't rely on other articles for references--too many errors here

Read and follow the editorial policy that appears in the January issue

Pay attention to items cited in #21 and write simply and concisely

Have something important to say and say it as clearly and succinctly as possible, with due regard to the advice given in our "Information to Contributors"

Study the journal to which your article will be submitted and write for the readers of that journal. Write the abstract LAST. An effective introduction citing reasons for undertaking the reported work is very important

- 1) Read instructions carefully
- 2) Read related articles in same journal, noting style and organization
- 3) Read reviews carefully. Allow time for digestion of comments. If the reviewer has made incorrent statements, study your manuscript to see if you can clarify the point for the reviewer

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<p>A questionnaire was sent to the editors of 132 professional journals in engineering and allied scientific and technical fields to determine policies and procedures involved in acceptance or rejection of material received and in publication in the journals. Comments or suggestions that might be helpful to potential contributors were solicited. Three of the questionnaires were returned as undeliverable, and 87 replies were received (67 per cent return).</p> <p>The majority of the journals have circulations between 3000 and 15,000 and their primary focus is on basic and applied research, theoretical development, applications, and new developments in the field. They are supported primarily by subscriptions and page charges.</p>			
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19. (Continued)

Most have part time editors of whom half receive some payment for their effort.

All but four of the editors use referees regularly, but only 17 indicated that they always accept the referees' judgments. All supply instructions for authors, and about two thirds specify a style guide. All but two accept unsolicited material from authors who are not members of the sponsoring society, and most sometimes solicit materials. The most common reasons given for rejection of material were the subject (not suitable for the journal), the coverage (questionable significance, too shallow, or questionable validity), and the presentation (bad organization or ineffective expression).

The most puzzling or irritating factors in working with authors relate to suggested changes and to expression. The most common mistakes are in the organization and presentation of the material and failure to follow instructions provided for preparation of manuscripts. The most common advice the editors would give is to follow guidelines provided for preparation of manuscripts, to write concisely, and to present only material that will be of interest to readers in a logical sequence with proper citation of related work.

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